

**Notes from District 9 - Community Meeting  
10-Year Strategy to End Homelessness  
City of Long Beach**

**Date:** Wednesday September 21, 2005  
**Time:** 6 - 8 PM  
**Location:** Houghton Park  
6301 Myrtle, City of Long Beach, 9<sup>th</sup> District (Val Lerch, Council Member)

**Opening Remarks:**

Joe Colletti, Consultant from the Institute for Urban Research and Development (IURD), made the opening remarks and explained the purpose of the meeting. It was explained that several jurisdictions throughout the country have been putting together strategies to reduce homelessness in cities. Part of their success has been due to their ability to obtain feedback from all segments of cities unlike ever before. The meeting was called in order to gather comments from the general public in the 9th District of the City of Long Beach concerning homelessness to inform a Working Group and ultimately a Steering Committee established by the Mayor to make recommendations to the City of Long Beach 10-Year Strategy to End Homelessness. Attendees were encouraged to fill out a Volunteer Sign-Up Form if they wished to become part of the Working Group that will advise the Steering Committee on homelessness issues. Attendees were also encouraged to complete a Public Comment sheet.

The following items were distributed:

- a. Volunteer Survey
- b. Public Comment Sheet
- c. Explanation of the 10 year strategy

Mr. Colletti introduced the following individuals:

Ms. Jonda Matrone staff from Val Lerch's office, Councilmember, 9th District

Ms. Linda Ivers staff from Rae Gabelich's office, Councilmember, 8th District

Corinne Schneider, Manager, Bureau of Human and Social Services, Department of Health and Human Services

Connie Sziebl, Field Deputy, Don Knabe's Office, LA County Board of Supervisors

Jack Smith, HSAC

Jack Garrett, IURD

2. Mr. Colletti explained the agenda and meeting process. First, individuals were encouraged to take a card to speak publicly. Second, there was a time for discussion. Rules of order were explained to the participants. No individual spoke for more than 5 min. We are currently in the second month, could take up to 18 months for full process.

**Summary of Public Comments:**

Lena Wilson - homeless and member of Community Action Network "CAN"

She was present at the onset of the 10 year plan and found out she is considered a "chronic" homeless woman. She feels Long Beach has no services and the help they do offer is useless. She quoted statistics: 40% of homeless women & children, 33% mentally ill, 15% addicts, 13% veterans. Said that she has lied for shelter, saying she was battered or an addict to be eligible. She explained that there is a new class of homeless and no solutions are in the plan for them. Feels addicted homeless get the "band aid" treatment. The welfare reduction over 5 years is

adding to the problem. The homeless need help now – The Housing Trust Fund, Section 8. They want genuine answers and are tired of repeating the same thing, not getting new results.

Stephanie O'Connor - formerly homeless

No longer homeless as of Friday, 9/16/05. Said that resources need to cooperate with each other. Help needs to start today, not in 10 years. There is a need for more community participation and understanding. Said that a friend, Annette, helped with a deposit to get her and her husband off the street.

### **Summary of Discussion**

Joe Colletti opened discussion: To be successful, 10-year strategy needs community input. There are more than 200 10-year plans in the US. Plans focus on different aspects of homelessness.

#### *The Chronic Homeless*

A person is chronically homeless if he or she has been without housing for one year or more, or four times in three years, and has a disability. In an average city 20% of homeless are defined as chronic, but they receive 80% of resources. A large percentage of chronically homeless are mentally ill. Street Outreach used to befriend the homeless then try to get them to come to the services. Now services are taken to them to reduce costs (such as mental care, health care, substance abuse counseling.)

- Statistics show tent cities have failed in every community
- Reiterate the importance of volunteer survey: continues input.
- Subcommittee will evaluate what is not working, and focus on what will work.
- Homeless prevention – tens of thousands at risk, cheaper to keep them housed than to get them back into housing.

Lena – one year is not enough time to go from nothing to something

Audience member – Stated money is being spent on the visibly homeless. In San Francisco it may get 700 people off the street, to the detriment of thousands more

Audience member – Asked why there is no advertising of the focus groups. No real community involvement when only the same people show up to each meeting. Where does the money come from and how is it spent?

Harry Saltzgaver, Steering committee member – stated most of the homeless are invisible. Can't ask about money at this stage. Long Beach thought five years ago opening the MSC was a new approach. The homeless need to become self-sufficient to get off the streets. We need an understanding of the problem for a good solution. Meetings are publicized, but this is the response they get. Agrees new input is needed. Low attendance is not because of poor communication.

Jack Smith – not getting mailings, suggested Margaret's list go out at every meeting.

Audience member – Focus group meetings being announced at neighborhood meetings.

Stephanie – Stated that the homeless see people who want to help as the enemy

Lena – Stated we need the same compassion for homeless as we have for the hurricane victims. Suggested an “Adopt a Homeless” idea – help with hotel, job, etc. Homeless want the help.

Audience member – Suggested that we need to change the perception of the homeless. Show a different side of homelessness.

Audience member – Wanted to know what isn’t working at MSC, shelter is not part of the city.

Lena – Stated that the help is not the right kind of help. Don’t need a voucher for canned goods when you have no can opener. Needs are not met by the MSC.

Audience member – Stated that we need to get the school districts involved to teach trades. (School District is part of the steering committee.)

Audience member – Stated that a place is needed for people to use as an address on job applications and ID cards so they can get jobs.

Corrine Schneider – Stated that a mini “Stand Down,” place with resources for the homeless. MSC does not have enough resources, the needs outweigh the resources and they are aware of the problem.

Lena – Stated that churches should keep their doors open so homeless could have a place to sleep.

Audience member – Stated legally churches cannot do this, but a revolving system may be an answer. Need to streamline bureaucratic process.

Stephanie – Asked why police do not arrest the homeless that have warrants outstanding

Audience member –Suggested that a one stop for all information to help from becoming homeless.

Stephanie – Stated that when she called for assistance she was not getting callbacks, need bigger staff to assist those that are seeking assistance.

Audience member – Stated she knows that poverty programs from utilities exist. Is there a list of what aid is available?

Stephanie – Stated that General Relief only a part of what is needed. She conceded that many people try to take advantage of the system.

Audience member – Stated that there are intake and screening processes that keep out grifters.

Lena – Stated that rent control is needed

Audience member – Explained that Santa Monica is proof that rent control does not work, affordable housing a better solution. Rent is shared between renter and government subsidy.

Harry – Stated that he wants solutions that do not require endless subsidies. “Teach a man to fish” type solutions.

*Other jurisdiction findings*

80-85% of the homeless are not “chronic”, they get off the street in less than a year, as an example Stephanie got off the street by getting help from a friend - a deposit for an apartment.

Corinne explained that the MCS has first/last month rent assistance “Home Fund”, with the following stipulations:

- Be a client
- Have income
- Find an apartment with realistic rent

Lena felt race plays a role in the time it takes to get off the street.

Surveys and comment sheets were then collected. Corinne stated that the city will post meeting notes online in approximately 3 weeks.

**Adjourned**